

Tips for Employers and Employees to help reduce fatigue risk factors

Mental and physical demands of work

Risk factor	Control measures to consider
<p>These include, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repetitive or monotonous work; • sustained physical or mental effort; • sustained and/or complex physical or mental tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-design jobs to eliminate boring, repetitive tasks • Improve communication • Provide training to allow multi-skilling and effective job rotation • Use alarms and monitors, particularly for solo work (eg driving vehicles) • Use plant, machinery and equipment to eliminate or reduce the excessive physical demands of the job • Reduce the amount of time employees/workers need to spend performing sustained physically and mentally demanding work • Ensure there are adequate employees/workers and other resources to do the job without placing excessive demands on staff • Roster enough employees/workers during peak times and demands • Ensure adequate breaks during shifts to allow recovery • Allow supervisors and employees/workers to reschedule tasks if fatigue becomes a problem • Ensure work demands gradually increase towards the middle of the shift and decrease towards the end • Eliminate sources of risks that might exacerbate fatigue (eg lack of job control, manual handling, extremes of temperature) • Improve communication processes • Improve the duration and timing of work • Ensure safe and efficient shift hand-over

Work scheduling and planning

Risk factor	Control measures to consider
<p>Night shifts, including the number of consecutive night shifts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate or limit night work where possible • Eliminate the use of night shifts for particular jobs or activities • Schedule complex tasks for daytime • Schedule work for hours when the risks may be lower – for example, complex and safety-critical tasks are best undertaken during normal day shifts when employees/workers are less likely to be fatigued, rather than during low body clock periods (ie don't schedule tasks between 2am and 6am and, to a lesser degree, between 2pm and 4pm) • Avoid scheduling higher risk tasks on the first night of a night-shift cycle. If unavoidable, when planning the task consider additional controls such as job rotation or additional rest breaks • Minimize or redesign routine administrative tasks to ensure employees/workers can focus on core duties during their night work • Limit the number of consecutive night shifts worked – no more than four night shifts in a row • Allow regular night-shift employees/workers periods of normal night's sleep to catch up on their sleep deficit • Ensure that rosters allow for at least two full nights' sleep after the last night shift • Arrange shifts so that day sleep is adequate • Use a forward-rotation shift system (ie morning to afternoon, afternoon to night) • Improve the order, speed, direction and length of rotation of the shift cycle • Except for emergencies, give at least 24 hours notice before night work. Consider providing a longer period of notice so that employees/workers have time to adjust their activities • Allow for naps during night shifts

Long hours of work in a single shift. This includes travel time, especially for remote sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce working hours • Increase resourcing • Eliminate the use of extended hours for particular jobs or activities • Control the length of shifts • Limit the use of overtime, especially unscheduled overtime • Monitor hours of work • Provide alternative transport at end of overtime/long shift
Long hours of work across a shift cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a working-hours policy on daily work hours, maximum average weekly hours, total hours over a three-month period and work-related travel • Reduce working hours • Reduce the number of consecutive day shifts that can be worked • Eliminate or reduce the need to work long shifts for more than four consecutive days • Allocate shift employees/workers consecutive days off, including some weekends, depending upon their fatigue-risk level • Avoid working arrangements that provide incentives to work excessive hours • Control overtime, shift swapping and on-call duties • Offer alternatives to employees/workers who may have difficulties adjusting to working hours
Long hours because of on call duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit use of standby and on-call duties • Ensure that exchange of shifts does not result in excessive hours • Ensure that responding to emergencies does not result in excessive hours
Short breaks between work shifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the length of breaks between shifts • Allow for recovery between work periods • Defer non-urgent work to allow appropriate rest and recuperation for employees/workers • Provide rest days (opportunity for two consecutive night sleeps) • Improve the timing of shifts • Allow for family and social commitments between shifts and shift cycles • Make sure that there is enough time in a break for six hours uninterrupted sleep
Short breaks within work shifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more and/or longer breaks to allow for recovery within work periods • Provide adequate resources to cover breaks • Ensure adequate number and location of crib and toilet facilities • Reduce the use of split shifts • Where split shifts are used, arrange timing so sleep of employees/workers is not disrupted due to the times they are required to work
Shift start/finish times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't start or finish between 10pm and 6am • Ensure time for adequate communication at shift handovers • Match shift times to the availability of public transport
Changes to rosters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set shift rosters ahead of time and avoid sudden changes of shifts to allow employees/workers to plan leisure time • Reduce irregular and unpredictable work schedules • Manage workload and work-pace change caused by machinery breakdowns and planned and unplanned absences • Allow for family and social commitments within the roster cycle

Work environment Conditions

Risk factor	Control measures to consider
Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve job control and the other risk factors associated with stress • Ensure opportunities to clarify stress-related issues

Adverse physical Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid working during periods of extreme temperature • Control exposure to hazardous substances and environments • Provide effective protective clothing and equipment, allowing for different shifts • Use heating and cooling to control ambient temperatures to support alertness • Provide adequate facilities for rest, sleep, meal breaks, onsite accommodation (if appropriate) and other essential requirements, such as bathroom facilities • Install adjustable, vibration-free seats in appropriate machinery and vehicles • Ensure the workplace and surroundings are well lit, safe and secure
Excessive commuting times necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start work at long distance commute sites on the day after arrival and start travel home on the day after the shift cycle is finished • Assist with travel arrangements, eg provide transport • Reduce active working time to account for long commuting time or distance
Individual and non-work factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide suitable professional advice, eg an employee assistance program, sleep disorder clinic • Maintain vigilance in identifying non-work related factors • Subsidize modifications to private homes to improve sleeping conditions (eg air conditioning) • Provide information and education about how non-work related factors can increase the risks of fatigue • Provide a mechanism to encourage employees/workers to report non-work factors that might affect fatigue management
Effect of exposure during extended shifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees/workers who perform repetitive manual tasks should have regular rest breaks • Ensure exposures are carefully monitored and exposure levels adjusted. For example, exposure during a 10-hour shift may not equate to 1.25 times the exposure experienced during an eight-hour shift

Tips for individuals on avoiding fatigue

Risk factor	Control measures to consider
Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best sleep is night sleep • If sleeping during the day, darken the room and allow more time than normal to fall asleep • Choose a quiet, peaceful place to sleep and adhere to a routine • Seven to eight hours uninterrupted sleep is adequate • Seek medical advice for excessive snoring, irregular breathing and insomnia
Drugs and alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid excessive consumption of alcohol – it affects quality of sleep • Avoid stimulants – they delay the need for sleep • Do not consume coffee or tea before going to bed
Medical conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have a medical condition, you should seek advice from your doctor if you are in a job that involves shift work or long working hours • Tell your employer about any medical conditions that may limit your ability to work or make you susceptible to fatigue • Ask your doctor for an alternative medication if it causes you drowsiness when you need to be awake
Fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a basic level of fitness • Exercise regularly • Keep your weight in check – obesity contributes to sleeping disorders